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SUBJECT: GUYANA ECONOMIC & COMMERCIAL ROUND-UP
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REFS: A) GEORGETOWN 417, B) GEORGETOWN 174, C) GEORGETOWN 233

GT&T: Cellular Network to Improve

[1](#). Chief Executive Officer of U.S.-owned Guyana Telephone and Telegraph (GT&T), Major General (Retired) Joseph Singh, announced on August 11, that all police 911 emergency numbers throughout Guyana have become operational and that the company continues to expand its cellular and rural landline networks. The announcement came amid complaints that the nationwide 911 network is often inoperable and that cellular phone calls are frequently dropped. Singh noted that the network expansion is being done partly in preparation for the upcoming Cricket World Cup to be held in Guyana in March 2007. The country's spotty communication network has been cited as a potential security vulnerability (Ref A).

Digicel to Launch GSM Network in Guyana

[2](#). Fast growing mobile telecommunications company, Digicel, will soon be allowed a licence to launch a GSM (Global Systems Mobile) network in Guyana, according to an announcement the Chief Executive Officer of the Digicel Group, Colm Delves. The GOG and Digicel concluded a Memorandum of Understanding on August 14. Meanwhile, speculation continues to swirl around a potential Digicel buyout of U.S.-owned Cel*Star, one of Guyana's two cellular service providers. Cel*Star CEO Pierre Strasser has declined to confirm such speculation with EmbOffs. The acquisition of the new licence will add Guyana to Digicel's twenty-one markets across the region. The announcement confirms President Jagdeo's proclamation last Spring that Digicel's entry was imminent (Ref B).

Inflation Watch: Consumer Price Index - July 2006

[3](#). The Bureau of Statistics reported that the overall price level of consumer items monitored in the Urban (Georgetown) Consumer Price Index (CPI) for the month of July 2006 recorded a 0.3% increase from the previous month. Year-to-date inflation from December 2005 to July 2006 was measured at 3.7%. On an annual basis, from July 2005 to July 2006, the CPI index rose by 8.1%, a slight decrease from the 8.3% annual inflation reported at year-end 2005.

Berbice Bridge gets US\$5.4 Million

¶4. The Berbice Bridge Company Inc (BBCI) on August 23 presented a ceremonial check for US\$5.4 million to the consortium of the Bosch Rexroth BV of the Netherlands and Mabey and Johnson of the United Kingdom to represent the first tranche of payment for the design and construction of a bridge across the Berbice River. Site preparation for the building of the bridge will begin on October 1, 2006 and completed is slated for the first quarter of 2008. A consortium of private companies and quasi-governmental organizations are financing the 1.75 kilometer floating bridge, with funding for access roads provided by the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB). In a press conference shortly before the August 28 national election, President Jagdeo dismissed suggestions that the timing of the announcement was politically motivated. As described in Ref C, the Berbice River Bridge has long been an apple in the eye of the ruling People's Progressive Party.

Civil Aviation: BWIA Implements New Security
Measures

¶5. British West Indies Airways, the only provider of daily flights from Guyana to the U.S., publicized new security measures for persons traveling to and from non-United States locations to the U.S. on August 10. Civil aviation authorities reported minimal disruption due to the stricter security requirements. TSA is expected in country in October to inspect operations at Cheddi Jagan International Airport in Timehri.

ROBINSON